



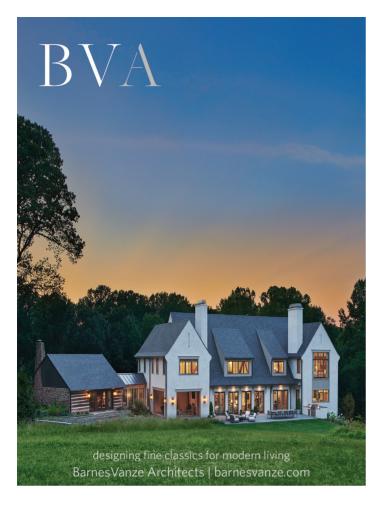


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Dining area of the 3303 Water Street Flat.

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## ARCHITECTURE

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## ARCHITECTURE

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ON THE COVER: Kozo Condominium, by Jonathan Kuhn Architect. Photo © Chris Spillman / RealEst Photography



## TWO DAYS IN JANUARY

Bradley W. Johnson

The shocking assault on the Capitol on January 6 made the inauguration on January 20 even more important than usual for signaling the continuation of Constitutional order. Much has been written about those two very different days, but it can be noted that on both of them, architecture acted as a stage and backdrop for the events that transpired, symbolizing in stone and mortar democratic values that were dangerously challenged on January 6 and strongly reasserted on January 20.

On January 6, members of a riotous mob desecrated the nation's most iconic exemplar of classical architecture—a building,

often called the Temple of Democracy, that belongs to all Americans, and whose design is intended to symbolize the American ideal of democratic self-governance. In the days that followed, security barriers erected around the Capitol and the national museums on the Mall gave the entire area the appearance of an armed camp, and severely muted the message of knowledge, memory, and beauty that is intended to be conveyed by the classical and modern architecture of the museum buildings. The boarding up of commercial buildings in the nearby downtown area, including ours, meanwhile, disrupted the architecture of that part of the city, turning it into a landscape of abandonment and fear.



But on January 20, with the Capitol's exterior repaired and flag-draped for the inauguration, the building's majesty played a key role in symbolizing the resilience of American democracy. When Lady Gaga, in singing the national anthem, turned her head and looked upward to emphasize the line, "Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there," many viewers, remembering January 6, may have interpreted "there" to mean the Capitol.

On the eve of the inauguration, and again during the next evening's Celebrating America event, the architecture at the other end of the Mall—the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the Reflecting Pool—was put to powerful visual use for mourning the 400,000 Americans who had died from COVID-19, and for reasserting not only our democratic norms, but the important values of empathy and decency. Lining the Reflecting Pool with 400 lights to symbolize those lost to the virus was a brilliant design stroke that instantly turned a part of the Mall that can sometimes feel like an empty zone into a space with profound meaning.

One more point: On January 6, it was the city's police force—the Metropolitan Police who first came to the aid of the Capitol Police, and who played a major role in expelling the mob from the building and reestablishing control of its interior. It was employees of the city of Washington, in other words, who helped rescue the country's seat of government. The irony that those police officers serve a city whose residents pay taxes but have no voting rights in the House or Senate was not lost on commentators. If you are looking for another argument in favor of DC statehood, you could do worse than focusing on the role of the city's police force in rescuing the Capitol on January 6.

Architecture is symbolically powerful, and belongs to all of us. It is always in the background of our lives, and sometimes in the forefront. That's a big part of the reason why architecture matters, and why we should care to make it good. We were reminded of that on those two days in January.

This issue of the magazine is our annual focus on residential architecture. It was planned well in advance of the events of January 6 and 20, and would seem to be little related to those events. But our ability to create and enjoy residential designs like those presented in the pages that follow is made possible in part by the role of architecture in helping to preserve foundational democratic norms and values. I hope you enjoy reading about the projects in this issue.

As always, we love to hear from you, so please feel free to write me.

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Ronald O'Rourke ("All the Right Angles" and "Striking the Right Balance") is a regular contributor to ARCHITECTUREDC. His father, Jack O'Rourke, was an architect in San Francisco for more than four decades.



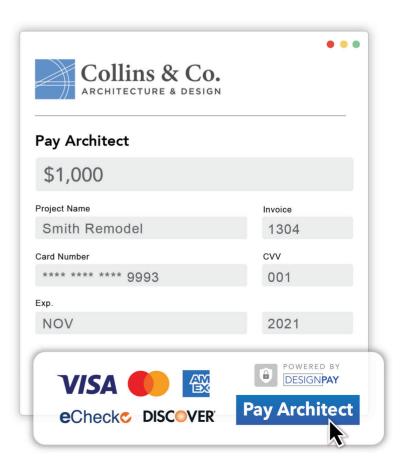
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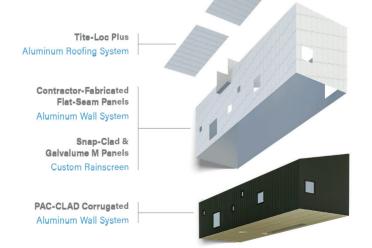


Civitas, Memphis Installing contr.: Ralph Jones Sheet Metal Architect: archimania Owner: Barry Alan Yoakum Photo: archimania

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TENVIRONMENT

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J Linea apartments, with the restored historic commercial building at right.

All photos © Mary Parker Photography, except as noted

At the northern end of Washington's Shaw neighborhood, **Hickok Cole**—the designer of many new apartment and condominium buildings in the city—has carefully inserted an angular new apartment and retail structure behind the façade of a century-old commercial building. The mixed-use residential project showcases the historic façade while articulating and reducing the apparent size of the residential tower that rises above it.

Located on 8th Street, NW, between Florida Avenue and V Street, the project is called J Linea, with the J referring to Jefferson Apartment Group (the project's owner and developer), and Linea referring to the building's angular lines. With eight above-grade floors (including a penthouse level) plus a basement parking and storage level, the project offers 132 apartments and 16,000 square feet of retail space. The apartment building's interior spaces were designed by **RD Jones + Associates**, an





J Linea, as seen from 8th Street and Florida Avenue

interior architecture and design firm with offices in Chevy Chase and Baltimore.

The site's existing two-story commercial structure—designed by John Lankford, one of the city's earliest Black registered architects—was previously the home of Town Danceboutique, an LGBTQ dance club whose modern interior, designed by STUDIOS Architecture, was the cover story of the Fall 2008 issue of ARCHITECTUREDC and the recipient of an award for excellence in interior architecture in the 2008 AIA|DC Chapter Design Awards. It's a reflection of Shaw's continuing development that 13 years later, these pages are now covering a new and very different successor design for the property.

J Linea "infuses a modern and industrial aesthetic reflective of the neighborhood's past and future," Hickok Cole said. "Shaw has long been viewed as the city's cultural epicenter, and served as inspiration for many of the project's signature design elements, including its dancing geometric floorplan and [its exterior] cascading gold fins, reminiscent of notes on sheet music."

Hickok Cole's design retained the commercial building's brick façade and added new brick wings on either side of it, creating a masonry base with



The existing commercial building, former home of Town Danceboutique.

a length proportionate to the overall length of the new building. In deference to the older structure, the building's residential upper floors are pulled back from the masonry base in a V shape, like an archer pulling on a bow string. The arrangement embraces and showcases the existing commercial façade rather than overwhelming or diminishing it, as can sometimes happen in projects of this type. A similar V-shaped indentation occurs on the building's opposite side, which fronts onto an alley, producing a pinched and slightly S-shaped floor plate. The building's shifting exterior planes, combined with smaller exterior



Alley façade of J Linea.

details such as its gold-colored composite metal panels, segment and punctuate the residential tower's elevations in a lively manner, creating major and minor rhythms in the design and breaking down the building's apparent mass.

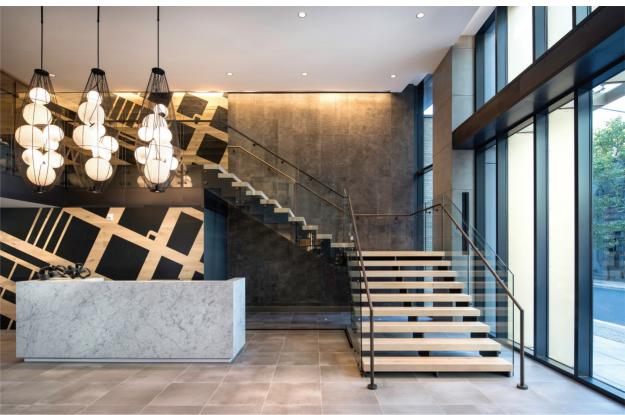
The owners "knew they wanted a project that would stand up to the competition that this emerging and trendy neighborhood provides, so our initial concept was to save the existing structure even though there wasn't a requirement to do so," said Laurence Caudle, AIA, director of housing and a principal at the firm. "We wanted to give this new building a real connection to the site's past. It also pushed the design into directions that otherwise would not have been considered."

J Linea "is located on a mid-block site along a rather narrow street, but the curve along Florida Avenue provided us with an interesting design opportunity," Caudle added. "By angling the typical

residential bar [i.e., the typical rectangular residential floorplate] and preserving some of the footprint of the existing two-story building, we were able to open up 8th Street and improve the pedestrian impact. This also prompted the orientation of the outdoor roof amenity space to face views from the east, south, and west. In fact, the western view gives you a shot directly down U Street."

The biggest structural challenge by far "was incorporating the existing structure while trying to maximize the FAR [floor-area ratio] of the building," said Guil Almeida, AIA, LEED Green Assoc., the senior project designer and a senior associate at the firm. This task "resulted in not being able to align the façade of the existing building with our new floor levels. The challenge turned out to be an enormous opportunity, as the resulting multi-level loft units are among the building's most desirable, featuring soaring ceilings and generous outdoor spaces."





Lobby.

Programmatically, Almeida said, "our biggest challenge was creating an amenity package [for tenants] that rivalled neighboring, much larger, new developments. By creating a glassy, double-height lobby and a mezzanine level that opened up to the street, and centering co-working, leasing, and fitness amenities around this space, we were able to mitigate the impact of having nine-foot, eight-inch floor-to-floor heights and visually enlarge the quantity of public spaces that the building provides to tenants, which are comparatively large for a building with just over 100 units."

RD Jones's designs for the building's lobby and amenity spaces, "are masterful in carrying the exterior design concept into the public spaces of the property," Almeida said. Materials used in these spaces include light- and dark-toned wood, large-format porcelain tile, and concrete grey textures. Gender-neutral restrooms in the amenity spaces, Almeida added, "not only serve as a display of inclusivity to a diverse resident population, but are also a great way to minimize the footprint of what would otherwise be large facilities serving relatively modestly sized amenities."

The building's eight penthouse-level units have their own rooftop terraces, as do some third- and fourth-floor units. Other units have balconies, raising a perennial challenge in the design of apartment buildings: how to include a lot of balconies without creating an arrangement that looks annoyingly repetitive or even dehumanizing.

"To avoid a potentially monotonous articulation of balconies, we typically implement a few different strategies: integrate balconies into a larger massing gesture, minimize their occurrence or appearance on primary building facades, and provide guardrails that are more solid or decorative in appearance," Almeida said. "Cladding [the balconies on the 8th Street side] in glass and spacing them closer together allows them to dematerialize or be read as one larger massing gesture, depending on the angle from which they're viewed."

On the building's less-visible alley side, he added, "we gave ourselves more leeway, providing as many balconies as possible. Driven by the owner's requirements, we aimed to provide a balcony for every single alley-facing unit—a feature that further distinguishes this multi-family product from competing properties. We enlivened the resulting field of balconies by taking the same shape and mirroring it back and forth as you go up the building. The result is an angular geometry that is consistent with the larger massing [features] of the building, creating an atypical gesture that injects a bit of controlled chaos into an otherwise quiet elevation, and surprising passersby who catch a glimpse of this playful display through the narrow alley entrances."

Balconies "often can become *de facto* storage units for bikes, plastic furniture, etc.," he added. "To soften the appearance of these personal belongings, we implemented a different type of guardrail for the alley balconies: a tightly perforated metal, lending more uniformity and dimension."



Typical apartment (unfurnished).

The design intent for J Linea "was always based on three solid principles: open up the street, honor the existing structure, and create a [design] language that is fresh and not overly referential," Caudle said. When asked what he liked most about the design, he replied: "The views from the units and the rooftop westward on Florida Avenue are even better than I could have hoped! I'm also pleased with the alley-side balconies—you don't often see alleys treated with this much attention—and pizzazz."

When asked the same question, Almeida pointed to "the unique architectural expression on the front and back elevations," how the depth and quality of the materials on the



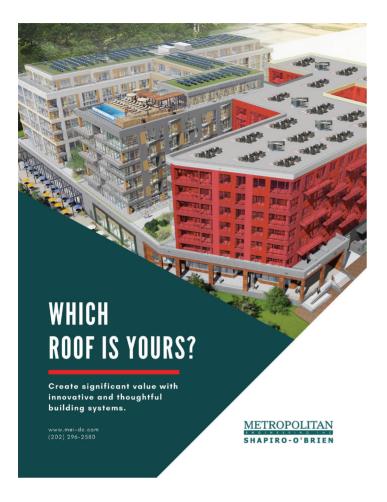
Kitchen in rooftop amenity space.

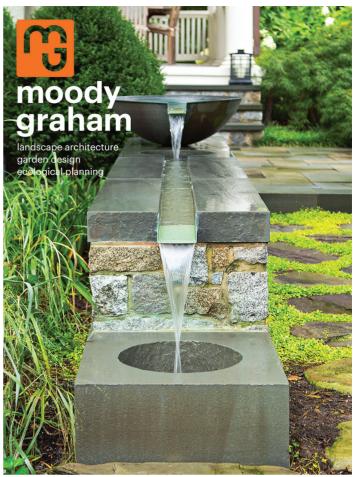
8th Street elevation provide a "textural, dynamic addition to a neighborhood teeming with new development," and how the massing on the 8th Street side "serves to highlight an existing building cherished by the community, and results in opening up a relatively narrow right of way."

Almeida also noted that "because the building is rather long compared to the width of the street, and considering the alley it sits on, it's always viewed obliquely, no matter which direction you come from." Given the three-dimensional nature of the design for the building's two main elevations, "walking around the property is a mesmerizing and engaging experience."





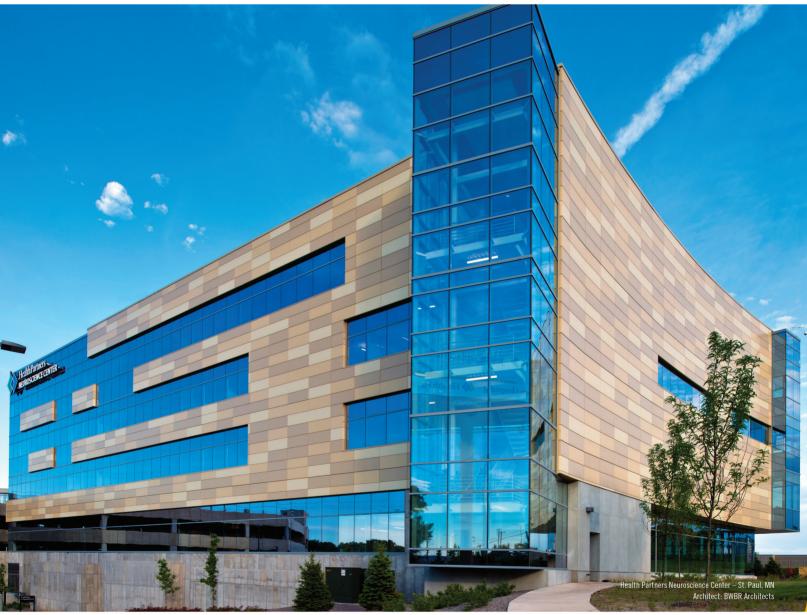






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Street façade of the Kozo Condominium.

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# Missing Middle Made Mod

## Small Condominium Sports Striking Façade and Efficient Plan

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP

In recent years, there has been much talk of a "missing middle" in the new-home market. Most new residential development has bifurcated into either detached single-family houses or large apartment buildings or complexes. This "middle" is defined in various ways, often emphasizing development that is denser than, but compatible with (and acceptable to residents of) single-family neighborhoods. In denser urban areas, the term can also refer to small multi-family buildings, typically with two to ten units, generally on infill sites—in this sense of the term, the main challenge is financial viability.

**Project:** Kozo Condominium, 1434 Chapin Street, NW, Washington, DC

Architect: Jonathan Kuhn Architect Landscape Architect: Norton Land Design Structural Engineer: FMC & Associates MEP Engineer: KK Engineering

Civil Engineer: Oyster, Imus, Petzold & Associates

General Contractor: P.T. Blooms



Main building entrance.

Traditionally, such small buildings have offered a relatively affordable form of housing. Given the crisis of affordability of many metro areas in the U.S.—certainly including metropolitan Washington—there has been strong interest in learning why this middle is so often missing nowadays. Community opposition is part of it, of course, but there is also the fact that single-family houses largely escape an array of code requirements (for example, sprinkler systems, fire separation, inclusionary zoning quotas, and accessibility for disabled residents), while larger buildings can amortize these expenses (plus elevators, code-required acoustic separation, and so forth) across multiple units, reducing the per-unit costs to a manageable level. New buildings in the middle must comply with most of the requirements but have relatively few units over which to spread the costs. Academics have proposed regulatory tweaks to ease the burden on the middle, although to date, few have been implemented.

Jonathan Kuhn, AIA, principal of his eponymous firm, Jonathan Kuhn Architect (JKA), has a great deal of experience with this project type. One of JKA's most recent projects, the Kozo, a new eight-unit condominium building, is an eye-catching example of the missing middle. It is one of many new buildings in the long sloping blocks of Chapin and Belmont Streets that connect 14th Street, NW, to Meridian Hill Park. On these blocks, modest lot sizes and medium-tolow-density zoning align to compel new buildings to be of a size that fits in the middle range. That said, designing and



Kozo Condominium as seen from across the street.



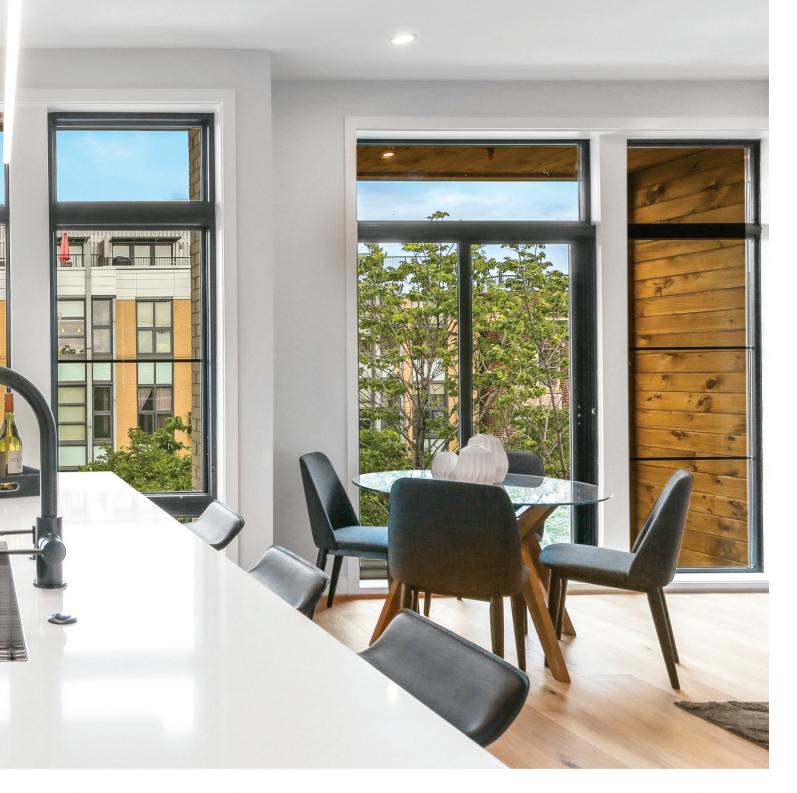
Kitchen and dining area of a street-facing unit.

building such housing is not easy. Some of the new buildings' budget difficulties are evident in their unambitious façades of inexpensive materials. For the missing middle to work, the architect must be careful to avoid big-ticket items like elevators and extra egress stairs. And any bravura architectural gestures must be "paid for" by extra-tight design elsewhere.

JKA's portfolio is primarily retrofits of historic properties. Of the Kozo, project designer **Emily Hurst, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP,** commented, "It was exciting to have the opportunity to start fresh."

Previously, this lot was occupied by a dilapidated woodframe house—the awkward surviving half of a former duplex. Developer P.T. Blooms had completed another eight-unit condominium on an adjacent lot and turned to JKA for a reprise. Both lots are quite deep, allowing each building to have two wings, one in front facing the street and a second in the rear facing the alley, separated by a courtyard. All the units have windows facing two opposite directions—an unusual luxury for dense urban developments. Each wing has four units: one flat each in the English basement, on the *piano nobile* (raised first floor), and on the second floor, and a duplex on the 3rd and 4th floors.

Since the 4th floor is accessible only from within the duplex units, and the English basements do not count as a "story" for the building code, it was legitimate to provide only one egress



stair for the building, saving significant money. (With an update to the code adopted in May 2020, this may no longer be the case.) To maximize efficiency further, the front wing's floor levels are a half-level higher than those of the rear wing: units open from opposite landings, eliminating the need for corridors, aside from those at the front first floor and rear basement which connect to the street and alley. There is no elevator, but the stairs are generously sized and have windows—a rare amenity for new apartment building stairways.

The size of the project also is within the building code's limits for wood-frame construction, which keeps costs down compared to steel or concrete structures. The lack of an elevator allows most of the units not to meet disabled accessibility

standards, which are not necessarily costly in and of themselves, but generally compel spaces and unit elements (especially doors and kitchens) to be larger than they might otherwise be. (There is one accessible unit, in the front lower level, which connects to Chapin Street with a private, step-free walkway—its interiors comply with the accessibility standards.) The eight-unit size also slips in under DC's Inclusionary Zoning threshold of nine units (whatever its societal benefits, "IZ," which mandates a percentage of affordable units in a given project, isn't a winning proposition for the developer of a small condo building—it involves mountains of red tape while forcing below-market prices on some of the units).

Façades at the alley and courtyard use inexpensive fiber-cement siding as their primary cladding material, a move that helps "pay" for the signature street façade, with its distinctive sculptural elements. The checkerboard composition of projecting balconies and deep-set windows in off-white brick, black metal, warm-toned wood, and glass is a standout on the block, immediately grabbing the attention of passersby. The architects refer to the elements as "voids and extrusions," said Hirst. "It's how the city might look in an aerial view."

In contrast with the urban norm of strict separation of interior and exterior spaces, those voids and extrusions deliberately blur the boundary. Windows completely fill the frames, and at the balconies (the "extrusions"), glass railings block as little of the view as possible—both in and out. The balconies are like jewel boxes, with LED strips separating black metal exterior shells and wood interior walls and ceilings. The LED strips are programmable to any color in the RGB scale, providing each owner an opportunity for individual expression, or, as Hirst noted, the ability to coordinate displays with their neighbors for a unified expression. The "voids" are deep returns of the brick jambs and heads. The building's main entrance is a hybrid of the two.

These are not cheap facades, nor easily constructed. For example, although the extrusions appear completely plumb and square, subtle slopes and proper flashings were painstakingly incorporated to provide necessary drainage. But the developer "loved the design immediately," said Hirst, "and worked to make it happen." Inside, kitchens have a frame of matching wood, a detail as exceptionally nice as it is rare in speculative construction. In general, the interiors are minimalist in their detailing.

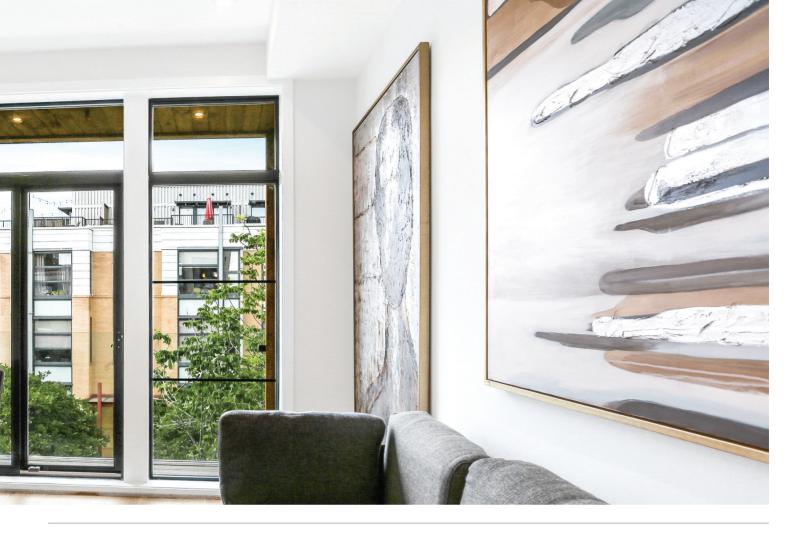
The name Kozo, which means "structure" in Japanese, came about well after the design was established. The name, in fact, was inspired by the street façade, which the developer felt had a Japanese character to it. The "architectural bonsai" sculpture that graces the front yard was commissioned to further the connection. It's a final grace note, suggesting to observers that, with efficient planning and a little design amibition, not only is execution of missing middle housing possible, but it can even afford evocative cultural touches.

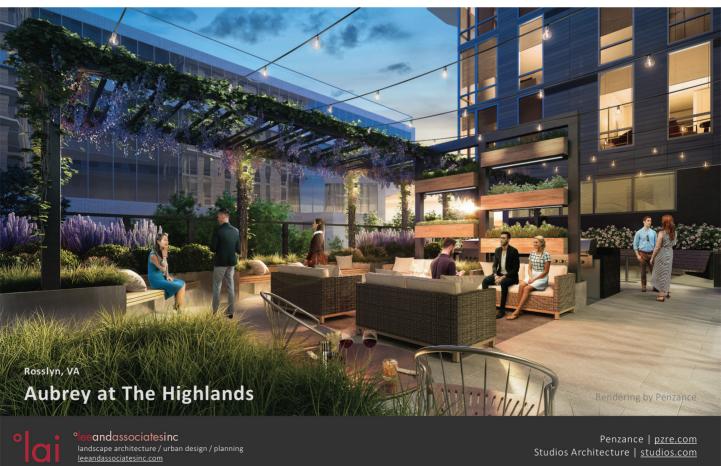


Dining and living area of a street-facing unit.



Typical street-facing balcony





# Pella Mid-Atlantic thanks P.T. Blooms Development and Kuhn Architecture for partnering on the Kozo Condominiums project



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# Radiantly Modern on the C&O Canal

Renovation Creates a DC Pad for a Baltimore Couple by Denise Liebowitz

Living area and lounge area, separated by a custom fireplace and television armature.





Courtesy of FORMA Design

"We were unafraid and happy with Andreas doing pretty much what he wanted," said the homeowner. "These were dream clients," said the architect. The result of this made-in-heaven collaboration is a boldly re-imagined Georgetown pied-à-terre overlooking the C&O Canal made distinctive with a series of curvilinear cove ceilings that both unify and define the spaces of this two-bedroom/two-bath condo.

Ruthie Carliner and her husband live in the Baltimore area, are empty nesters, and were looking for a getaway place in Washington where they could enjoy the city's cultural life and restaurant scene. "This minimal modern style was a big departure for us," said Carliner, noting that their primary residence in Maryland is far more traditional. The couple had seen images on Houzz of the interior design projects of Andreas Charalambous, AIA, IIDA, principal of FORMA Design. "Right away we recognized his attention to detail and edgy design," recalled Carliner.

When Charalambous first saw the 1,400-squarefoot flat in a 12-year-old building he thought it was in reasonable condition with nice views and floor-toceiling windows. He wondered what his new clients were hoping for. It turned out they were up for an adventure and wanted to hear from him what he envisioned for the space. Without a lengthy list of "must-haves" from the homeowner or pre-conceived stylistic constraints from the designer, client and architect were off and running.

They began with the floors. "They weren't terrible, just standard builder-grade wood floors," remembered the architect. When he mentioned radiantly heated stone flooring, the homeowners were immediately intrigued. They all went to a stone showroom and quickly settled on large-format gray stone tiles throughout the apartment. "Making the decision about the flooring really helped us to move forward with the design of the rest of the space."

Working with Poliform | sagartstudio, Charalambous replaced the dark wood finishes and granite countertops of the kitchen with glossy cabinets and Silestone counters all in pristine white that contrast cleanly with the gray stone floors.









The kitchen before renovation. Courtesy of FORMA Design

And because this was a getaway home where the owners' focus was more on restaurant outings than on home-cooked meals, the kitchen cabinetry could be scaled back. Instead of to-the-ceiling wall cabinets, the new installation features an LED-lit floating wall cabinet, giving a far lighter, more contemporary look. An under-the-counter refrigerator and freezer drawers and a compact Miele speed oven complete the highly functional but minimalist package.

The goal of maximizing every inch of space and establishing an open flow continued in the treatment of the dining area. Here, Charalambous simply extended the custom-designed dining table from the kitchen island as a space-saving move while still providing comfortable seating for six. The cove ceiling mimics the size and shape of the table below and an organically inspired LED chandelier heightens the drama.



Lounge area, with wood wall installation by artist Peter Glassford.

In the main living area, the architect began by removing a wall between the living room and the adjacent den. He maintained the definition of the two spaces, however, by placing a dramatic curved double-sided steel fireplace where the wall previously stood. Now, with a lounge on one side of the fireplace and sitting area on the other, the main living area feels far more expansive but still offers two distinct spaces with seamless flow between them. Another dramatic cove ceiling extends the length of the combined living area, serving as a unifying element in the linear space.

An office to the immediate right of the apartment entry is now also a guest room for visiting grandchildren. The architect replaced the existing double doors to the office with a disappearing pocket door that, when closed, echoes the black

framing and muntins of the large exterior windows. Then, he installed a wall system that during the day serves as a desk and home office but when guests arrive pivots easily to a double bed. And to heighten the grandkid fun factor, Charalambous sprinkled the ceiling with sparkling lights in varying sizes to mimic the night sky.

In the master bedroom, the cove ceiling motif continues where it serves as a canopy over the custom bed, which was designed by the architect and featuring a padded mosaic tile headboard that extends to the ceiling. Flanking either side of the bed are two smoked-glass wall mirrors that amplify the natural light and visually expand the room. Simple pendant lights hang in front of the mirrors.





Principal bedroom.





Office/guest room, with convertible desk/bed in mid-pivot.

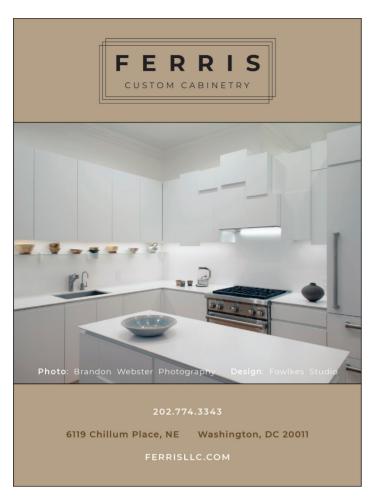
Both of the apartment's two bathrooms were fully renovated. In the master bath, Charalambous removed the tub and replaced it with a large walk-in shower/steam bath. Gray stone tile echoing the flooring found throughout the apartment lines the bathroom walls while the shower features pebble tiles. The double vanity is topped by Silestone and the mirror above is embedded with a hidden TV.

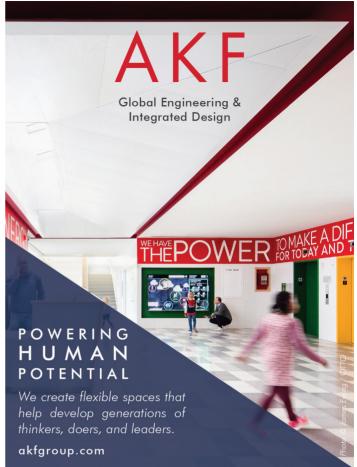
The architect and clients worked together to assemble the furnishings that are a mix of classic mid-century, custom-designed, and up-to-the-minute contemporary pieces. "When we were ready to start choosing furniture, I went to New York to the ICFF to scout the newest selections," said Charalambous, referring to the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, a major platform for global cutting-edge design. Four Pelican Club chairs, an icon of Danish 1940s design by Finn Juhl, provide seating in the living area (along with a "Sheep" Rocker for small visitors). In the lounge space, a round steel-and-glass side table is a classic by Eileen Gray, a pioneer of the Modern Movement.

Several of the area rugs are the design of Charalambous's firm FORMA Design.

The subdued color palette throughout the apartment provides a quiet backdrop for the owners' art collection. The lounge area is defined by a striking feature wall of reclaimed wood by artist Peter Glassford.

"I was trained as an architect, but I knew from the beginning I would focus on interior architecture and design," said Charalambous. "We have honed our craft to create the best interior spaces and then apply finishes, lighting, and furniture appropriate for that space and tailored to the client's taste and budget. This was such a fun and rewarding project with clients who were totally open-minded, able to make decisions quickly, and willing to push the envelope. And when I proposed something they disliked, they didn't mince their words. The result is creative architecture. Plus having clients who tell you how much they appreciate your work never hurts."









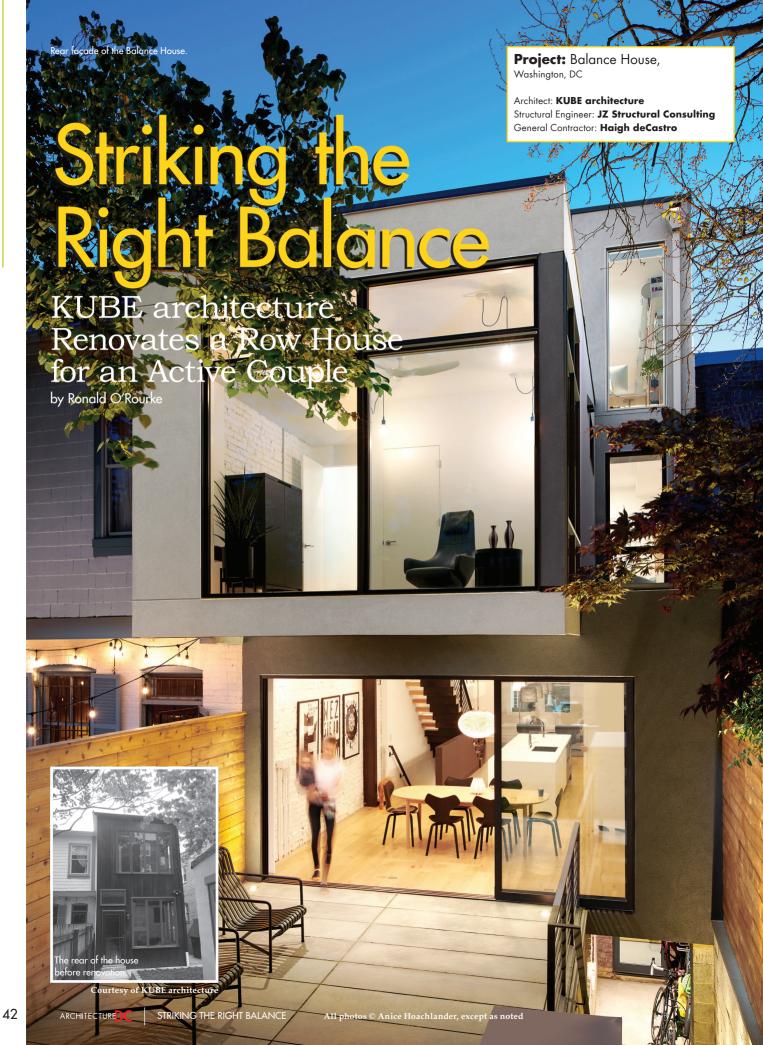
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Living room.

Can a renovation make the main part of a house seem bigger while actually making it smaller?

That seeming feat of magic is what **KUBE** architecture accomplished with Balance House, a project that renovated a 1912-built row house in Washington's Mount Pleasant neighborhood. **Janet Bloomberg**, **FAIA**, a firm partner and founder, was the project's partner-in-charge and lead designer, while **Andrew Baldwin**, a firm design associate, was the project designer.

The clients, a professional couple, asked for a modern residence that would accommodate their passion for bicycling and yoga—activities that incorporate the concept of balance. The program also called for maintaining the existing house's total of three bedrooms—a master bedroom, a second bedroom for their daughter, and a third for guests or a future second child—as well as adding an office/studio space, a second upstairs bathroom, and a bicycle workout and storage area.

"They wanted a warm but minimal house, somewhat Scandinavian in feel," Bloomberg said. "They also wanted the house to feel welcoming and comfortable—and livable. They didn't want to live in a museum."

KUBE responded with a design that reworked the house's two main levels, finished out the basement, and added a new third-floor office/studio.

The scheme opened up the first floor, turning it into a single space with clear sightlines, and reorganized it by swapping the locations of the kitchen and dining room. The kitchen, which was previously toward the rear, is now in the middle, adjacent to both the living and dining spaces, while the dining room, which was previously in the middle—cut off from the house's front and back windows—is now at the rear, where it receives ample daylight from a sliding window wall that also provides access to a back yard designed to serve as an extension of the living space.

The design for the second floor reduced the size of the middle bedroom, which was larger than it needed to be, and used the freed-up space to add a second full bathroom to that floor. As a result, the master bedroom now has its own bathroom, making it a proper master suite, while the two other bedrooms have their own bathroom.

And here's where the magic comes in: KUBE's design makes these changes while actually reducing the sizes of the first and second floors. The design shortens the length of the first floor in the back by 10 feet while filling in a small dog-leg space on one side, resulting in a net reduction of 50 square feet. But the result is a space that meets the owners' needs—and actually reads larger than it did before because of its open plan, clear sightlines, and visual extension into the back yard. The second floor, meanwhile, was shortened in the back by four feet, reducing its size by 55 square feet. But because it was shortened



Kitchen, looking toward dining area and rear yard.

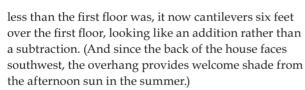


Bedroom with built-in storage.





Bathroom.



The basement was finished out as the couple's bicycle workout and storage space, with a bonus media room in the rear. "We spent a lot of time discussing [the owners' arrival] sequence from bikes and rear yard into the house and up to living space," Bloomberg said. "We created a rear entry from the rear yard, a mud room area with a bench to take off gear, a door directly into the basement bathroom which has a shower to clean up, and then a door to the hallway and stairs up to the main house. This route was discussed extensively with the clients, as they bike every day, so it's an important part of their day."

Consistent with the house's location in a historic district, the project did not alter the house's front façade. The added third-floor office/studio, which measures 385 square feet, is set back from the street and hidden behind the house's sloped attic roof.

On the inside, whitewashed brick party walls provide reminders of the house's original 1912 construction while contributing to a modernist design built around clean lines, simple rectangular volumes, and contrasting neutral colors. The house's floors are tied together by a stairway that transitions from darker

and heavier materials to lighter and more open ones as it proceeds up through the house.

"This staircase is one of my favorites that we've ever designed," Bloomberg said. "I love the balance of light and dark, and how it transforms from first floor to third—it's always changing, reflecting the spatial transformation of the house sectionally."

As Bloomberg's comment suggests, the project's concept of balance doesn't refer only to the owners' interest in bicycling and yoga.

The project "studies the concept of heavy and light in balance with each other," the firm said. "The house transforms from heavy to light, as one moves from basement to third floor studio. Within that transformation, dark and light elements interlock spatially and materially. The balance concept is carried through in each space slightly differently, from overall design to detailed elements."

The notion of balance, Bloomberg said, "inevitably brings up the idea of *yin-yang*. So dark and light started to make sense, and it went very well with the overall goal of the clients for the house to be minimal. We always like using elemental materials, so we introduced steel for the fireplace and stair, wood for the floors and stair treads, and glass for the stair wall as it gets lighter. The dark and light colors carry through the house, inside and out, reinforcing our concept."







Adding the office/studio wasn't a simple matter. "We had to insert the third-floor addition as an independent structure because our existing framing was not strong enough to support it, so a steel frame was inserted into the shell of the existing row house, running from basement to roof," Bloomberg explained. "You can see the exposed steel columns in first floor stair area and powder room."

In addition, she added, "we weren't allowed to remove the existing wood framing in the house because of its historic value, so we had to sister-in the new framing that widened the first floor to the full width of the site [where the dog-leg space had been] and allowed us to cantilever the new second floor rear addition. So new steel structure had to be interlaced within the existing wood structure—not an easy task! Running new mechanical ductwork and plumbing to new bathrooms was very tricky to do within the steel structure, without creating bulkheads. It took time to make all of this work."

The house "is in a historic neighborhood, so we are proud of being able to complete such a modern project there," Bloomberg said. "We had to convince the HPRB [Historic Preservation Review Board] to allow us to do the rear cantilever and large amounts of glass. But we think it is a nice counterpoint to the historic street-front facade of the house."

Architects, she added, "have to fight for ideas that are important to the integrity of the design concept, and that's not always easy when you're dealing with budgets and technical challenges. The second-floor rear cantilever was questioned a number of times due to the difficulty of incorporating it into the existing wood structure, and HPRB also challenged it. However, we stuck with it and continued to explain its importance to the concept and spatial experience of the project—and I'm so glad we did! I think that, without it, this project would not have the ultimate impact it has now."

KUBE's row house work, she said, is "always very specific to client, neighborhood, and program. So while we do a lot of them, we think of each as a totally new project. I think we've gotten better over the years, from all of our many experiences, so I feel like our details have gotten more refined. We are better at incorporating the structural and spatial challenges of a row house into our concept from the beginning, which allows us to try new ideas and experiment a bit more. I also think that, because clients know us for this work, they trust us more and allow us to introduce new concepts we've never done before."

Overall, "I love the way the project balances ultramodern design with warmth and comfort. That's not an easy balance to strike, but I feel like we did it with this project," Bloomberg said. "And so do the owners."





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**Project:** Kalorama Residence Renovation, Washington, DC

Architect: Christian Zapatka Architect

Landscape Architect: Page | Duke Landscape Architects Structural Engineer: Keast & Hood Structural Engineers

Kitchen Designer: **Emily Bourgeois**General Contractor: **Goode Properties, Inc.** 

## Let it Glow

## Renovation Highlights Demure Stone House's Glamorous Alter Ego

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

In a neighborhood full of urbane, quietly grand mansions typically clad in red brick or smooth stone, one Kalorama house stands out for its relatively modest scale and its irregular masonry façades, composed of blocks of rough stone in a variety of sizes, shapes, and colors. Set back from the street farther than most of its neighbors, it could be mistaken for an old farmhouse that endured as surrounding land was subdivided and developed. In fact, the house was built in the 1920s, around the same time as many of those nearby. It was designed by local architect J. Edgar Sohl for a client named Mary Lawrence and subsequently was owned by a succession of prominent people ranging from Mary Emlen Knight Davies, a Democratic political activist whose ex-husband later married cereal heir Marjorie Merriweather Post, to Max Weinberg, drummer for Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, who rented it out without ever living there.

At some point, a renovation transformed much of the house's interior. Most notably, the original main staircase, on axis with the front door, was removed in favor of a semicircular stair off to one side of the central hall, a shift that opened



Main hall, with the staircase now more visible and new doors to the rear yard.



All photos © Studio Trejo, except as noted

LET IT GLOW



Living room, with restored double doors and ornate mirror over the fireplace.

up views from the hall to the rear yard. The new staircase's curlicued railing, coupled with unusual paneled doors, decorative millwork, and an ostentatious mirror over the living room fireplace, all suggest the influence of the Regency Moderne style, which was synonymous with Hollywood glamour during the middle of the 20th century.

When Virginia Goode Ourisman, whose family is in the development business, and Robert B. Ourisman, Jr., of the multigenerational Ourisman car dealership empire, bought the house in 2017, the exterior looked much as it did when it was built, but the interior was fusty. The young couple wanted to open up and brighten the house without compromising its architectural integrity. Virginia Ourisman hired Christian Zapatka, AIA, FAAR, to oversee a judicious renovation.

"It's a lovely stone house that originally had something of a farmhouse aesthetic," Zapatka said. "Then somebody really went to town with the interior, I would guess in the late 1940's or '50s. When we got there, it was tired. There was this red wallto-wall carpeting, and some trim was damaged. We decided to embrace the mid-century renovation, though, especially in the living room and the hall, but to clean it up and air it out."

In the center hall of the main floor, Zapatka's most obvious move was to eliminate the enclosed vestibule that led to the basement stairs and slightly reduce the size of the dining room, creating enough space to open up the main staircase and allow its full curvature to be seen and appreciated. On the other side of the staircase, he introduced an opening between the hall and the newly expanded kitchen, which not only enhances the flow of the space, but also helps the staircase to read as more of a





Newly expanded kitchen.



Courtesy of Christian Zapatka Architect



Master bathroom

freestanding object, further augmenting its sense of grandeur. At the rear of the main hall, an existing glass-paneled door with a transom and sidelights was replaced by a more gracious pair of French doors that open onto a new terrace, thus enhancing the connection to the rear yard. The paneled double doors opening into the living room and dining room were retained and restored. Gleaming brass hardware on both the interior and exterior doors now complements the brass handrail on the stair.

The second-floor plan was thoroughly reworked. An office and one bedroom were combined to create a large master suite, while the two other bedrooms gained private en-suite bathrooms. The third floor contained the house's biggest surprise: a large open attic space, accessible only by pull-down steps, soaring to 11 feet at the ridge of the ceiling. When touring the house for the first time, Virginia Ourisman recognized that

the attic floor could be converted into substantial usable space. In order to achieve this, Zapatka extended the semicircular staircase to the top level and divided the attic space into two additional bedrooms, each with its own bathroom and walk-in closet.

Crown moldings on the main level were repaired and, where necessary, infilled by skilled plasterers. Abstracted versions of the first-floor trim were added on the upper levels. Throughout the house, narrow-plank flooring was replaced with wide-plank wood in a lighter tone. Formerly dingy walls and trim were repainted in a bright white that makes all spaces feel lighter and airier.

Exterior changes were minimal. Previous owners had entered into a conservation easement agreement with the L'Enfant Trust, which entails substantial restrictions on

alterations to a covered property. Zapatka was able to add a large shed dormer to bring daylight to one of the new third-floor bedrooms facing the rear. He also obtained the trust's approval to build a gable on the front of the house, which had been part of J. Edgar Sohl's original design, but the clients ultimately decided not to pursue that addition. Whereas previous landscaping included the typical bushes right next to the house, which muddied the impression of the architecture, the new landscape design is much neater and crisper, allowing the house's form to read more clearly.

This renovation involved challenges that are common in projects involving historic buildings, most notably the existence of previous alterations that must be reconciled both to the original architecture and to current needs. In this case, three distinct eras in the house's nearly century-long history now coexist comfortably.

The author thanks Kathy Orton, of The Washington Post, for information regarding some of the house's former owners.



Front façade and yard of the renovated house.





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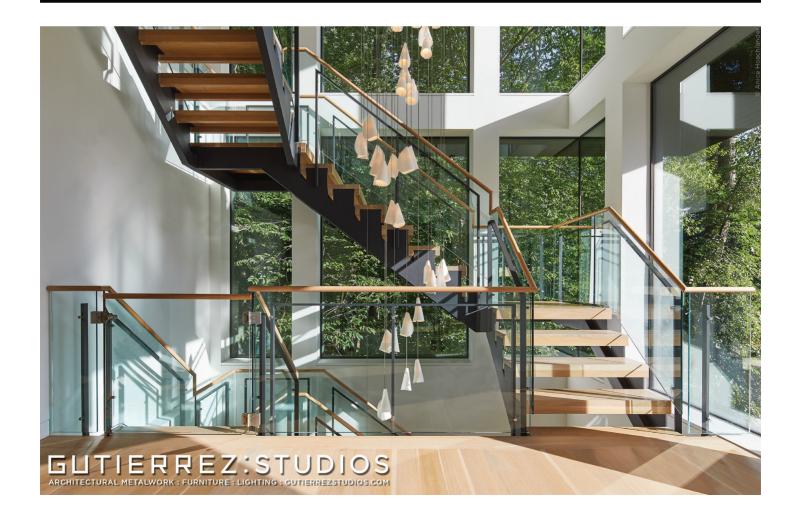






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The Humb Shipping Embraces

And it's Green, Too

by Denise Liebowitz

"Oh no, nothing like that," Arun Arumugaswamy replied emphatically when asked if the inside of his new home built out of shipping containers sounded like a tin can. "When the kids crash into the walls it's more like a gong," he said, sounding cheerful. Arun and his wife, Archana Shah, and their two toddlers took up container living six months ago in Takoma Park, Maryland, on a wooded site overlooking Sligo Creek. It is, however, definitely not your grandfather's container. This 3,500-square-foot, light-filled home is elegant, eco-conscious, and visually stunning.

The couple first began thinking about shipping containers during their honeymoon in New Zealand where they came across an attractive new shopping center built from the corrugated steel boxes. "The repurposing, sustainability, and design possibilities appealed to us," said Arumugaswamy. "The idea had been in the back of our minds for a while." When the couple relocated to the Washington area they began their search for an architect who had experience with containers and quickly came across **Travis Price, FAIA**, principal of **Travis Price Architects**.

A prolific and visionary designer, Price became interested in the possibilities of shipping containers years ago as an architecture student, but it was not until 2014 that he had an opportunity to try his hand at Washington's first residential container project. "A client with a deteriorating house in Brookland [a neighborhood in Northeast Washington] that he rented to Catholic University students asked for my help

**Project:** Sea Container House, Takoma Park, MD **Architect: Travis Price Architects** Structural Engineer: Silman Civil Engineer: Snyder & Associates Energy Modeler: PEG, LLC General Contractor: KGP Build



renovating the property. The house was clearly a teardown, so I suggested replacing it with a sea container structure." Remarkably, in less than eight months, plans were drawn, permits issued, construction completed, and the four-unit complex housing 24 students was fully occupied. "Amazing," said the architect, "building in the city never happens that fast."

"This is exquisite technology," he said of a typical COR-TEN steel shipping container. "It constitutes a great new building block of 21st-century architecture and represents a new culture of modernism." In addition to its durability and relative affordability when compared to conventional building construction, the architect points to the value of repurposing significant quantities of steel to meet housing needs.

And there are a lot of shipping containers. Price cites container stats with ease: There are about 33 million containers crossing the high seas at any given moment; an additional 2.3 million are sitting fallow in ports worldwide, and of those, 750,000 are in the U.S. Nearly all of the containers come from China and, as a result of unbalanced trade patterns, far more containers come into the U.S. than go out - it simply doesn't make financial sense to ship empty containers back to Asia. Most of the containers used for residential building measure 40 feet long, 8 feet wide, and 9 feet 6 inches tall. The price of a container reflects its condition: A heavily used container that has made multiple ocean crossings with the resulting nicks, dings, and possible contamination can cost as little as \$1,200, while a pristine "one-trip" box can cost up to \$5,000.

Building on the success of his student housing project in Brookland, Price continued testing the limits of shipping container possibilities to include high-design,



Side view of the house, showing the sea containers with added windows and bays.



customized single-family homes. It was about then that Arun Arumugaswamy and his wife discovered him while doing their own research on container construction.

"We had looked at this site several times," explained Arumugaswamy, "but kept walking away because it seemed too narrow and steeply sloped." However, they eventually asked Price to take a look and the architect immediately saw the potential in the property. Very quickly, the clients were at the Port of Baltimore selecting four lightly used containers for their new home and calling in an air quality specialist to check for any possible contamination from toxic cargo.

Many container homes include some component of conventional building construction. This "hybrid" approach allows far greater design flexibility and more open floor plans. In this project, the house is formed by four containers stacked two high and set 20 feet apart. The space between the containers serves as the home's double-height living area and is built with conventional materials and techniques. Parts of the walls of the flanking containers have been cut away to provide an open flow between container space and new construction space. On the

second story of the house, compact bedrooms and bathrooms occupy the two upper-level containers. The entire structure sits on a concrete foundation/basement.

The exterior of the house is a mix of black corrugated container steel and black-stained wood cladding. The rear façade is fully glazed and the floor-to-ceiling windows provide dramatic views out to the wooded slope and the creek below. A rear deck opening from the main living space surveys the same vista. Several extended glass-and-steel "bump-outs" serve to widen the interior spaces; provide views left, right, and skyward; and allow natural light to flood into the home. And as an additional design element, two skylights—one in the central living area and one over the stair—further connect the interior to the outdoors. Many of the home's large windows are protected with shutters fabricated from container steel, which not only frame views and help control light entering the interior but also provide a powerful exterior design feature.

The interior of the home is warm, open, and modern. Buffed to glowing, the one-and-a-half-inch Asian hardwood flooring that runs throughout the house is the standard-issue flooring





Living area as seen from the second floor, with the dining area at lower left.



Dining area.



Bedroom with skylight.



Main staircase.

used in most shipping containers. "It's as durable as mahogany and as beautiful," said Price, who points to its reuse as one more example of the sustainability of building with shipping containers.

The white interior walls and ceilings are a mix of sheetrock and exposed corrugated container steel defining the space with an industrial vibe. The structural strength of sea containers is such that significant portions of their walls can be removed without compromising their integrity. On one side, the main living area flows into the adjacent container whose wall has been largely cut away to make room for a low dining table with cushion seating. On the opposite side of the room the corrugated container wall has been left mostly intact with a door leading to two bedrooms and a bath. A sleek black steel fireplace is suspended from the double-height ceiling. Furnishings are modern, minimal, and kid-friendly. At one end of the main living area an IKEA kitchen, fitted





Rear of the house.

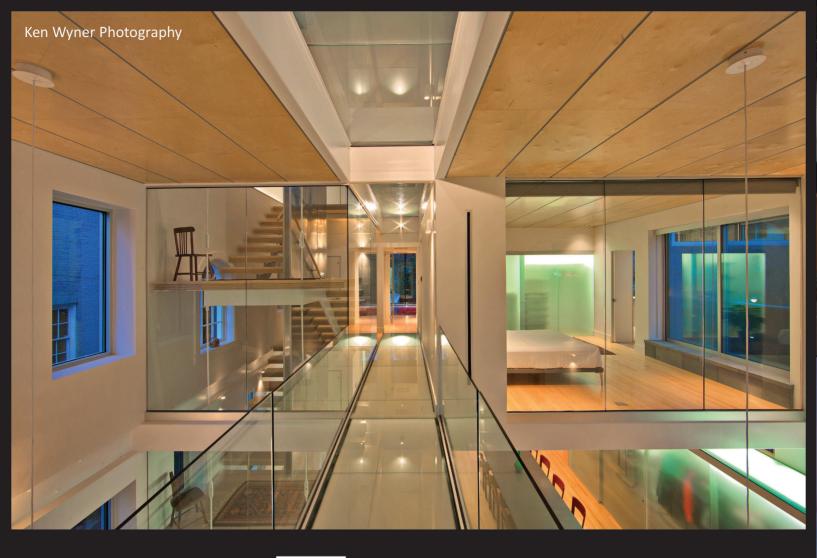
with cabinets fabricated from recycled materials and stainless steel countertops and backsplash, completes the open-plan design.

An open stair in glass, steel, and wood leads down to the basement and up to the second floor and its three bedrooms. In all, the home contains five bedrooms, three full baths, and one half bath. A conventionally built garage is attached to the house and a door on the second floor provides access to what will become a rooftop vegetable garden, well out of reach of the neighborhood's foraging deer and rabbits.

Price is messianic when extolling the virtues of shipping-container homes. "They are durable, repurposed, fast to build, and less expensive." But beyond such pragmatic advantages, the architect sees something more. "It is architecture that represents a true revolution in the way we live. It is a house wrapped in watertight metal cocoon on the outside with the warmth of wood on the inside. It is affordable

modernism." Price has completed four container projects with four more currently under construction and has designed 25 more that are in various stages of development. He says that container homes can be up to 20 or 25 percent less expensive to build than conventional customized homes. But he is quick to point out that beyond the inexpensive steel structure, all the other costs of electricity, plumbing, insulation, etc., remain the same as in traditional construction. "The real challenge for us as architects is an affordably beautiful project that meets codes, budgets, and has enduring aesthetics."

Still, his clients appear to have happily settled into container living. "It's the kind of modern design we are very comfortable with," said the homeowner. Even the neighbors are welcoming the newest addition to their suburban setting. Seeing a stranger gazing intently at the new container home, one passerby called out appreciatively, "Isn't it a knockout!"



# KGP BUILD



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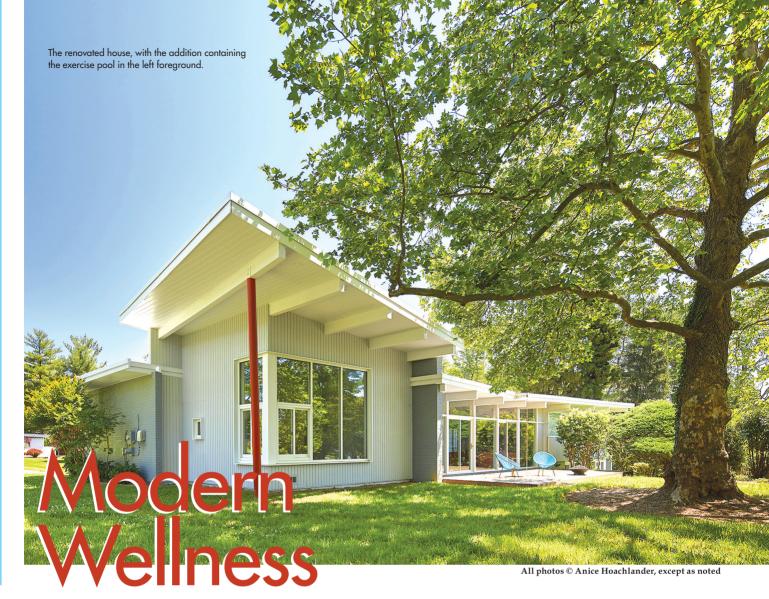


KGPBuild.com



TravisPriceArchitects.com





## Fitness-Oriented Addition Anchors Update of Mid-Century Gem

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

It's an old trope: The shoemaker whose children go barefoot; the chef who pops open a frozen meal at home; the doctor who fails to seek proper treatment for her own ailment. In the case Andrew Walen, it was a psychotherapist focusing on eating disorders and body image who was constantly running among his small chain of therapy centers, but lacked adequate facilities to support his own wellness at home. His mid-century modern house was in need of some freshening anyway, so he called on **Rick Schneider**, **AIA**, **APA**, **LEED AP**, of **ISTUDIO Architects**, who had worked on several of Walen's therapy centers, to update the house and add a room for an exercise pool.

The house is one of several hundred built by developer Gordon E. Sugar in the Stevenson Road area of Pikesville, Maryland, beginning in the late 1940s. Virtually all of them are one-story ranches with flat or nearly flat roofs and abundant glass. Despite those common characteristics the houses are remarkably varied, and each is uniquely situated on its lot.

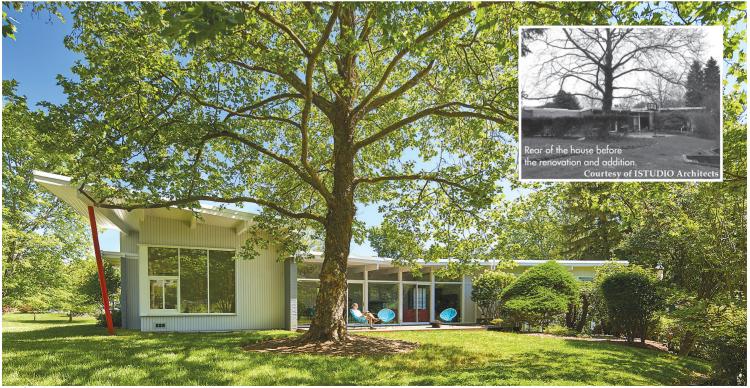
Walen's house had a shallow butterfly roof and was rectangular in plan except for two slightly projecting wings

toward the front and a curiously large notch cut out of one of the rear corners. That notch provided the perfect place for the addition containing an Endless Pool—a pool with jets that provide resistance while the user swims in place—and a sitting area where Walen's wife can meditate. One corner of the adjacent garage was enclosed to form a small vestibule linking the new exercise room to the existing kitchen.

Perhaps the biggest question in the design of the addition was the treatment of the roof. "We decided that the new space was kind of a special place for our client," said Schneider. "Instead of just completing the existing butterfly roof, we decided to celebrate the space. So we lifted the entire roof of the addition over the existing house and then gave it a sharp angle. It seemed like the right gesture for the rear of the house, which had been kind of plain before." The new roof is supported by exposed glue-lam beams with the same spacing as the exposed beams in the existing house, except for the outermost one, which is splayed to support the acutely angled corner of the projecting roofline. A slanted steel strut, painted bright red, holds up one



Rear of the house, with new patio.



Rear façade and yard.

67



Interior of the addition including the Endless Pool.

end of that last beam and provides a visual exclamation point for the entire composition.

Although fully enclosed, the new pool space has a porch-like feel, with large windows and white vertical wood siding lining three of the walls (the siding was stained rather than painted, using a water-based product—a more environment-friendly option). The former exterior brick wall on the eastern side of the space was retained, extended to meet the taller roof of the addition, and painted white to match. The flooring is natural slate protected with a water-borne sealer.

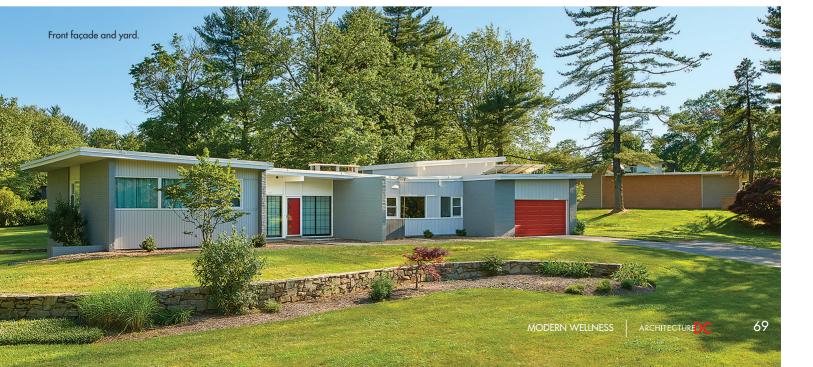
The most obvious change to the existing house was a new neutral color palette of gray and white, with the exception of the front door and garage door, which were painted red to match the angled column at the rear. More significant, however, was a design change that addressed a long-standing practical problem common to butterfly roofs: drainage at both ends of the

valley. Schneider's solution was to add a scupper on each end, with a rain chain that channels water into a patch of river rock over a storm drain. At the rear of the house, the river rock occupies a square cut-out in the newly added patio, creating a delightful architectural accent while also solving a bothersome technical issue.

In executing the addition, Schneider worked with contractors to ensure that the new footings would not harm the roots of a glorious sycamore tree in the rear yard. Having dutifully protected the tree, he looks forward to possible future phases of the project, including a Zen garden that was conceived as part of the original master plan for the house. Meanwhile, Walen has sold his company and is now a vice president of a larger corporation, so he may be even more eager to maximize opportunities for promoting wellness in his own home.



View from inside the main living area to the rear patio.











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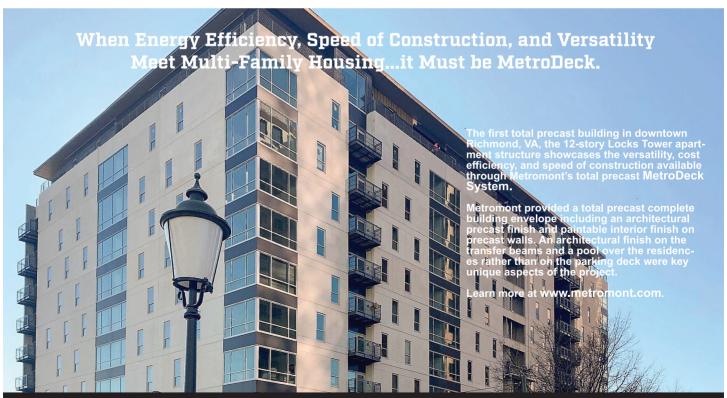
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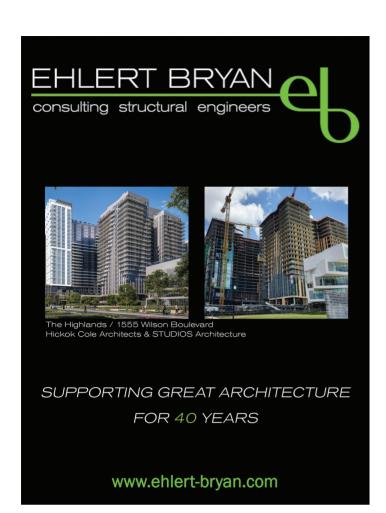






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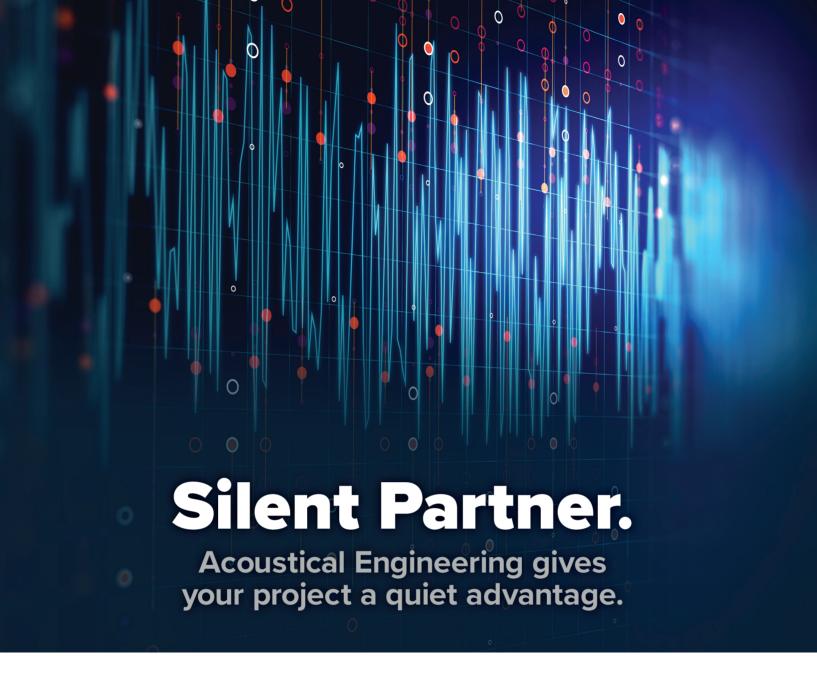
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